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RUEHBJ/AMEMBASSY BEIJING PRIORITY 6449

RUEHUL/AMEMBASSY SEOUL PRIORITY 4995

RUEHBY/AMEMBASSY CANBERRA PRIORITY 9134

RUEHCHI/AMCONSUL CHIANG MAI PRIORITY 5762

RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY

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RHEFDIA/DIA WASHDC PRIORITY

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 BANGKOK 003226

SIPDIS

NSC FOR WILDER AND PHU

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TAGS: PGOV PINR KDEM ASEC MOPS CASC TH

SUBJECT: THAKSIN ASSOCIATE HOPES FOR MEDIATION OF POLITICAL STANDOFF

REF: A. BANGKOK 3192 (SIDDHI: NO COUP)

1B. BANGKOK 3154 (EX-COP THREATENS)

1C. 07 BANGKOK 3625 (PALLOP'S BACKGROUND)

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Classified By: Ambassador Eric G. John, reason 1.4 (b,d)

SUMMARY AND COMMENT

11. (C) Yongyuth Tiyapairath, a close ally of former Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra, told the Ambassador on October 28 that a neutral Thai figure should mediate between Thaksin and Privy Council President Prem Tinsulanonda, whom Yongyuth considered the principal leaders of the two sides in the current political standoff. Yongyuth viewed the People's Alliance for Democracy (PAD) as a proxy of Prem's and said the military would launch a coup if ordered to do so (by Prem, presumably). He also described religious tension among Buddhist groups. The Ambassador emphasized the USG desire that political disputes be resolved peacefully and in accordance with the rule of law. Yongyuth complained that Thailand's system of governance appeared more like an absolute monarchy than a constitutional monarchy. He claimed that Privy Counselor Surayud Chulanont plotted with named co-conspirators approximately two years ago to assassinate Thaksin, and he also said he feared for his own safety.

12. (C) Comment: We are highly skeptical about Yongyuth's claim that Surayud plotted to kill Thaksin, but we do not doubt that stories such as that one circulate in pro-Thaksin circles. We agree with Yongyuth's view that the hostile state of relations between Thaksin and Prem is a fundamental cause of the current polarization of Thai society, but we find it difficult to envision reconciliation between the two.

Yongyuth presented himself as well-intentioned and hoping for a peaceful resolution, but we believe he is one of the strategists involved in preparing for street fighting, if necessary, and was an appropriate recipient for the Ambassador's message about our interest in non-violence. End Summary and Comment.

END THE STALEMATE THROUGH MEDIATION

13. (C) In an October 28 discussion with the Ambassador and

poloff at the Ambassador's residence, former House of Representatives Speaker Yongyuth Tiyapairath, a close associate of former Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra, lamented the current state of Thai politics. Yongyuth said the standoff between the Somchai Wongsawat administration and the People's Alliance for Democracy (PAD) reflected a fundamental state of hostility between Thaksin and Privy Council President Prem Tinsulanonda. PAD, Yongyuth stressed, was simply a proxy for Prem, who sought to hinder Thailand's democratic development.

¶14. (C) Yongyuth suggested the best way to resolve the current standoff was for a neutral figure to serve as mediator between Thaksin and Prem. Yongyuth twice suggested that King Bhumibol play this role. (Comment: The concept of mediation is sensible; the idea that the King might serve as mediator is utterly unrealistic and raises serious doubts about Yongyuth's political acumen and/or sincerity. End Comment.)

POLITICAL VIOLENCE

¶15. (C) Yongyuth said that further political violence could result if the current stalemate continued. When the Ambassador asked Yongyuth's view of the likelihood of a military coup, Yongyuth noted that the military's leadership had said publicly they would not launch a coup, but the military had seized power in the past, and soldiers ultimately had to follow instructions from "the mastermind" (read: Prem), otherwise the military leaders would be forced out from their positions. Yongyuth said he had a "sixth sense" that opponents of Thaksin would create "unpleasant events," possibly including bombings in Bangkok, in order to

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provoke a military response.

¶16. (C) Explaining that there were 300,000 monks in Thailand, and 34,000 abbots, Yongyuth emphasized the possibility for a religious clash. He said many mainstream Buddhists were worried about the growing influence of the Santi Asok, a thousands-strong radically ascetic Buddhist sect associated with PAD co-leader Chamlong Srimuang. Consequently, mainstream monks had "sent a message" that they would be "destroyed" by Santi Asok if PAD were to win its fight against the government, and they should "fight" (NFI).

¶17. (C) The Ambassador explained that he had discouraged military leaders from contemplating a coup, and he also advocated a peaceful resolution to the current standoff in accordance with the rule of law. The Ambassador asked Yongyuth's view of the threat of retired police official Salang Bunnag to evict PAD protestors from Government House (ref B). Yongyuth said he only knew Salang from media reports, although he added that the two of them had spoken two days ago. Salang reportedly said that he felt a moral duty to support the police, who were confronted with egregious violations of the law by PAD, and he also wanted to help Thaksin, given that they were both alumni of the Police Academy. The Ambassador said Salang ought not to confront PAD protestors at Government House.

PLOT TO KILL THAKSIN

¶18. (C) Yongyuth said that Thaksin would need a guarantee of his safety from Prem were he to return (eventually) to Thailand. Yongyuth claimed General Pallop Pinmanee had twice told Yongyuth that Privy Councilor Surayud Chulanont had encouraged Pallop to deploy a sniper at Bangkok's Royal Grounds (Sanam Luang) to assassinate Thaksin. Yongyuth said this plotting took place approximately two years ago. (Comment: The alleged plot presumably pre-dated the 2006 coup d'etat. Pallop is one of Thailand's least savory military figures -- see ref C. End Comment.) Yongyuth named all of

Surayud's and Pallop's alleged co-conspirators:

- Piya Malakul, who has claimed close ties to the King and Queen and who appears close to the PAD; Piya hosted the co-conspirators' meeting at his residence, Yongyuth claimed;
- Academic Pramote Nakhonrat, whom Privy Counselor Siddhi Savetsila recently cited to the Ambassador as a member of his informal brain trust (ref A);
- Constitutional Court Justice Jarun Phakdithanakun; and
- Administrative Court President Akaratorn Chularat.

¶19. (C) Yongyuth added that he was currently concerned for his own safety, claiming that soldiers were regularly posted outside of his home to surveil him, and he believed his phone was tapped. He said he maintained a network of safe houses and constantly changed the venue where he slept. He predicted that, in the event of another military coup, he would likely be arrested or killed.

REMARKS ON THE MONARCHY

¶10. (C) Yongyuth said he hoped to pursue further studies in the U.S., adding that the political chaos had eroded his pride in his identity as a Thai. Yongyuth said with dismay that Thailand claimed to have a constitutional monarchy, but in reality it often seemed Thailand had an absolute monarchy, with the Palace vetting appointments to high-ranking military and civil service positions, and the King was treated "like a god." The King was generally inaccessible, and those around him often provided him with inaccurate information. Many people (e.g., PAD) tried to harness the influence of the Palace and to direct popular anger at their opponents by claiming they were not loyal to the monarchy. These circumstances were unhealthy for Thailand, and also detrimental to the long-term interests of the royal family,

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Yongyuth said.
JOHN